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THE HEBREW IDEA OF THE FUTURE LIFE

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III. BABYLONIAN INFLUENCE IN THE DOCTRINE OF SHEOL

In two previous articles¹ we have considered those conceptions of the future life which the Hebrews held before their migration out of their primitive home in the Arabian desert. We must now consider the new elements that entered their eschatology in consequence of the occupation of Canaan.

The Canaanites were a Semitic people, closely akin to Israel; and their original beliefs concerning the soul, as archaeology shows, were identical with those of the other Semites; but, as a result of long-continued Babylonian influence, these beliefs had undergone many important modifications during the two millennia that preceded the Hebrew conquest.² The Babylonian ideas of the other world that the Canaanites adopted they passed on to the Hebrews who settled among them and amalgamated with them. As a result of this process, the Old Testament contains not only primitive Semitic beliefs concerning the future life, but also another diverse cycle of ideas which goes back ultimately to a Babylonian origin. This leads us to consider the Babylonian conception of the other world and its analogies in the Old Testament.

The Sumerian, or pre-Semitic population of Babylonia had already reached a high stage of civilization before the Semites arrived on the scene. Primitive conceptions of the dead as resting with their kinsmen in the family grave the Sumerians had outgrown. They conceived of the shades as dwelling together in a mighty realm, and as socially organized after the manner of an ancient Babylonian kingdom.³

¹ *Biblical World*, January and February, 1910.

² Paton, *Early History of Syria and Palestine*, chap. iv.

³ On the Babylonian conception of Hades see Jeremias, *Die babylonisch-assyrischen Vorstellungen vom Leben nach dem Tode* (1887); Jensen, *Die Kosmologie der Babylonier* (1890); Jeremias, "Hölle und Paradies bei den Babyloniern," in *Das Alte Orient*,

For this realm the usual Sumerian name is *Aralû*, of which the etymology is unknown. Its common Hebrew name is *Shēōl*, of which also the meaning is uncertain. Jeremias and Jastrow think that *Shēōl* appears in Babylonian as *Shu'ālu*, but this is denied by Jensen and Zimmern. Another Babylonian name is "Land of the Dead," or "Death." Similarly in the Old Testament "Death" or "the Dead," is used frequently in poetic parallelism with Sheol (e. g., II Sam. 22:5 f.; Hos. 13:14; Ps. 115:17). Still another Babylonian name is "Earth." Thus in the epic fragment known as *Ishtar's Descent to Hades* (rev. line 5) we read, "Ishtar has gone down to the Earth, and has not come up."⁴ In the *Gilgamesh Epic* (XII, iv, 1) Gilgamesh asks Eabani after "the law of the Earth," meaning as the sequel shows, the nature of the other world.⁵ In the Old Testament also "Earth" is a frequent synonym of Sheol (Exod. 15:12; Isa. 14:9; 29:4, Eccles. 3:21).⁶ Closely similar in meaning is the Sumerian word *Kigal*, "Great Beneath," or "Underworld," which passes over into Semitic as *Kigallu*. To this corresponds the Hebrew *Ereš-tahtîyā* (or *tahtîyôth*), which our version renders "the lower part of the earth" but which more properly means "Lower Land" or "Under-world" (Ezek. 26:20; 31:14; 32:18, 24). Since this region is regarded as a vast cavern, it is called *Nakbu*, "the Hollow,"⁷ or "the Hole of the Earth."⁸ The same conception appears in the Old Testament in the name *Bôr*, "the Pit" (Ezek. 26:20; 31:14, 16; 32:18, 23; Isa. 14:15, 19; 38:18; Ps. 28:1; 30:3; 40:2; 88:6; 143:7; Prov. 1:12; 28:17; Lam. 3:53, 55), or the synonymous *Shahath* (Job 33:18, 24, 28, 30; Isa. 38:17; 51:14; Ezek. 28:8).

From these names it is evident that both Babylonians and Hebrews regarded Sheol as situated in the depths of the earth. One is said to "go down" to *Aralû*, or to "come up" from it. The gods of *Aralû*

1900, Part 3; Zimmern, in Schrader's *Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*³ (1903); Warren, *The Earliest Cosmogonies* (1909). For the corresponding Hebrew conception see the works cited in the preceding article, *Biblical World*, February, 1910, p. 80.

⁴ *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*, VI, 87.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 263.

⁶ Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos*, 18.

⁷ S. A. Smith, *Miscellaneous Texts*, 16.

⁸ *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*, VI, 262.

are also the gods who cause vegetation to spring out of the ground. When the Babylonian kings wish to describe the depth to which they carried the substructures of their mighty edifices, they say that they laid the foundations "on the breast of Araltû," or "of Kigallu." The tower-temples of ancient Babylonia were regarded as counterparts of E-kur, "the mountain house" or inhabited earth, and beneath these the dead were buried, to correspond with the way in which the shades dwelt beneath the abode of the living.⁹ In the inscriptions the tops of these tower-temples are said to be as high as the mountains, and their bases as low as the under-world. Similarly in the Old Testament one "goes down" or is "brought down" to Sheol (Ps. 28:1; 30:3; 88:4; 107:26; 143:7; Isa. 14:19; 38:18; Ezek. 26:20; 31:14, 16; 32:18 f.), and the sick man who barely escapes death is said to be "brought up" from Sheol (I Sam. 2:6; Job 33:24, 28, 30; Ps. 9:13; 16:10; 30:3; 49:15; 86:13; Lam. 3:53, 55; Jonah 2:6; Wis. 16:13; Tob. 13:2). How literally this language is meant is shown by the story of Korah and his company who "went down alive into Sheol" (Num. 16:30-33; cf. Ps. 55:15; Prov. 1:12); or Amos 9:2, which speaks of "digging into Sheol." Isa. 7:11 speaks of "going deep unto Sheol"; Isa. 29:4, of the shade as speaking "deep from the earth"; Isa. 57:9, of "descending deep unto Sheol." Sheol is called the "under part of the earth" (Ps. 63:9; 139:15; Isa. 44:23), and both Sheol and the Pit have the adjective "beneath" attached to them (Deut. 32:22; Ps. 88:6; Lam. 3:55). Ecclus. 51:5 speaks of the "depth of the belly of Hades." Sheol is lower than the foundations of the mountains (Deut. 32:22; Jonah 2:6). Beneath the earth are the "waters under the earth" (Gen. 49:25; Exod. 20:4; Amos 7:4), but Sheol is lower than these (Job 26:5; Lam. 3:53; Jonah 2:3 f.). The deepest thing conceivable is said to be "deeper than Sheol" (Job 11:8), and the depths of Sheol are often contrasted with the heights of heaven (Job 11:8; Ps. 139:8; Isa. 7:11, Amos 9:2). From these expressions it appears that Babylonians and Hebrews alike regarded Sheol as a vast cavern under the ground, the subterranean counterpart of the space included between the earth and the celestial dome of the "firmament."

Sheol could be entered directly through a gap in the earth, as in

⁹ Hilprecht, *The Excavations in Assyria and Babylonia*, 465.

the case of Korah and his company; but such a route was unusual. Ordinarily it was entered through a gate in the western horizon. The myths of the descent of Ishtar (Venus) and other astral deities indicate that the road to the under-world was that followed by the celestial bodies. The west was the region of darkness and death, as the east was the region of light and life. A man haunted by a ghost prays, "Unto the setting of the sun may he go."¹⁰ The Hebrews must have had a similar conception, since in Enoch 22:1-4 the entrance to Sheol is described as lying in the distant west.

The habitable earth was regarded as an island lying in the midst of the ocean; consequently, in order to reach the entrance of Sheol at the setting of the sun, it was necessary to cross the sea. In the *Gilgamesh Epic*, Gilgamesh, who has set out to seek his ancestor Ut(Pir? Šit?)-napishtim, after crossing the Syrian desert and passing the mountains of Lebanon, reaches the shore of the Mediterranean, and inquires of a goddess how he may cross the sea. She replies: "There has never been any ford, Gilgamesh, and no one who since the days of yore has arrived here has ever crossed over the sea. The sun, the hero, has crossed over the sea, but except the sun, who has crossed? Hard is the passage, difficult the way, and deep are the Waters of Death that lie before it. Where, Gilgamesh, wilt thou go over the sea? When thou comest to the Waters of Death, what wilt thou do?" Presently, however, she shows Gilgamesh where he may find a ferryman who will carry him over the waters. Together they make a forty-five days' journey to the western end of the Mediterranean. Then they enter upon the "Waters of Death," or the ocean beyond the straits of Gibraltar. After terrible perils they succeed in passing this, and land in the farthest west on the shore where Ut-napishtim dwells.¹¹ This ferry over the Babylonian Styx is alluded to also in an incantation, where the priest says, "I have stopped the ferry and barricaded the dock, and have thus prevented the bewitching of the whole world," i. e., I have prevented the spirits of the dead from coming back across the ocean to molest men.¹² Because of this necessity of crossing the "Waters of Death"

¹⁰ King, *Babylonian Magic and Sorcery*, p. 119, line 19.

¹¹ *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*, VI, 217-23; Jensen, *Gilgamesch Epos*, 28-33.

¹² Jeremias, *Hölle und Paradies*, 15.

the Babylonian Sheol received the epithets *mat-nabalkattu*, "land of crossing over," and *iršitu ruktu*, "distant land."

This thought was familiar to the Hebrews also. They conceived of the earth as surrounded by water, and therefore spoke of the "ends of the earth." To reach Sheol one had to pass across, or through the waters. II Sam. 22:5 f. (=Ps. 18:4 f.) reads: "The waves of Death compassed me, the floods of Belial made me afraid, the cords of Sheol were round about me, the snares of Death came upon me; and Jonah 2:2-5: "Out of the belly of Sheol I cried. . . . for thou didst cast me into the depth, into the heart of the seas, and the flood was round about me; all thy waves and thy billows passed over me. . . . The waters compassed me about, even to the soul; the deep was round about me; the weeds were wrapped about my head" (cf. Job 36:16 f.; Ps. 88:7; 107:26; 124:3-5; Lam. 3:54; Amos 9:2 f.). Deut. 30:12 f. contrasts "crossing the sea" with "going up into heaven," and in Rom. 10:7 "crossing the sea" is interpreted as "descending into the abyss." Of the ferryman across the "Waters of Death" there is no trace in the Old Testament. Spirits are supposed rather to "fly away" to their abode (Ps. 90:10). The bird-like form assumed by the soul for its journey was a widespread belief of antiquity, and appears probably in the word "twitter" that is used of the voice of ghosts in Isa. 8:19; 29:4. This idea was not unknown to the Babylonians. In *Ishtar's Descent* (obv. 10) we read of the shades, "They are clothed like a bird in a garment of feathers."¹³

For the ancient Babylonians there were seven heavens presided over by the sun, moon, and the five planets. There were also seven stages of the tower-temple of the earth. In like manner *Aralû* was conceived as containing seven divisions separated by walls. These walls were pierced by seven gates, which had to be passed in succession by the goddess Ishtar before she reached the lowest depth (*Ishtar's Descent*, obv. 37-62). These gates were fastened with bars, and there was a porter who opened them to newcomers. The seven divisions of Sheol are familiar to Jewish Theology.¹⁴ They are first mentioned

¹³ See Paton, *op. cit.*, I, *Biblical World*, January, 1910, p. 18; Weicker, *Der Seelen-vogel in der alten Litteratur und Kunst* (1907).

¹⁴ Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, II, 328 ff.

in II Esdras 7:80 ff., but the idea is certainly much more ancient. Prov. 7:27 knows of the "chambers of Death" and Isa. 14:15; Ezek. 32:23 of the "recesses of the Pit." The gates of Sheol are referred to in Job 38:17; Ps. 9:13; 107:18; Isa. 38:10; Wis. 16:13; Matt. 16:18; and their bars in Job 17:16; Jonah 2:6. The Greek text of Job 38:17 speaks of the "gatekeepers of Sheol."

Sheol was primarily a cosmological conception, and had nothing to do with the grave as the abode of departed spirits, but the Babylonians were unable to keep the two ideas apart. The result was that Sheol was pictured as a vast tomb in which all individual tombs were included. The same ideogram was used both for grave and for Aralû. In the incantations the ghosts are said interchangeably to come forth out of the grave and out of Aralû. Everything that the heart delights in on earth is eaten by worms in the under-world (*Gilgamesh Epic*, XII, iv, 7 f.). Similarly in the Old Testament Sheol and the grave are used interchangeably in a great number of passages (e. g., Gen. 37:35; Ps. 88:3, 5, 11). Isa. 14:11 says, "Thy pomp is brought down to Sheol . . . the worm is spread under thee, and worms cover thee." Ezek. 32:17-32 speaks of all the nations as lying in graves in the midst of Sheol. Hence the conception that Sheol is dark (in spite of the fact that the sun goes down into it). Thus in Babylonian one of its epithets is "dark dwelling." In *Ishtar's Descent* (obv. 7) it is called "the house where he who enters is deprived of light," and in line 10 it is said, "they see not the light, they dwell in darkness" (cf. *Gilgamesh Epic*, VII, iv, 35). In like manner in Job 10:21 f. it is called "The land of darkness and of deep gloom, the land of thick darkness like darkness itself, the land of deep gloom without any order, and where the light is as darkness" (cf. Job 17:13; 38:17; Ps. 88:6, 12; 143:3; Ps. of Sol. 14:19). For the same reason Sheol is conceived as a place of dust. In *Ishtar's Descent* (obv. 9, 11) it is said, "Dust is their food, clay their nourishment. . . . Over door and bar dust is strewn" (cf. *Gilgamesh Epic*, XII, iv, 10). So also in the Old Testament "dust" is a synonym of Sheol (Job 7:21; 17:16; Isa. 29:4).

The Babylonian Sheol stands under the rule of the god Nergal or Irkalla (a personification of Irkallu, "great city," one of the names of Aralû), and his wife Ereshkigal, "mistress of the under-

world." In their service stand Namtâru, the death-demon, and a host of evil spirits who roam over the earth, afflicting men with all sorts of diseases, and seeking to win new subjects for their masters. Survivals of similar conceptions appear in the Old Testament. Sheol is frequently personified as a hungry monster opening its jaws to devour men (Isa. 5:14; Hab. 2:5; Jonah 2:2; Prov. 1:12; 27:20; 30:15 f.). It seems to have been worshiped as a deity by the Canaanites, to judge from certain place-names in Palestine.¹⁵ Muth, "Death," was deified by the Phoenicians.¹⁶ He appears in the Hebrew personal name *Ahi-Môth*, "Death is a brother," and probably in several place-names. In the Old Testament Death is often personified, and is used in parallelism with Sheol (Job 30:23; 38:17; Ps. 107:18). He appears as the ruler of Sheol in Ps. 49:14: "They are appointed as a flock for Sheol, Death shall be their shepherd"; and in Job 18:14: "He shall be brought to the King of Terrors." Another demon of the under-world is apparently Belial (*B'liya'al*), which the scribes have fancifully vocalized as though it meant "without use," but which may mean "the god who swallows" (*Bālî-ēl*). He appears in Nah. 1:15; II Sam. 22:5 (= Ps. 18:5). Similar is the "destroyer" of Exod. 12:23, or the "destroyers" of Job 33:22. Diseases are often personified as the evil demons of Sheol; e. g., Job 18:11-13, "Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall chase him at his heels. His strength shall be hunger-bitten, and Calamity shall be ready at his side. It shall devour the members of his body, yea the Firstborn of Death shall devour his members"; Hos. 13:14, "Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from Death? Hither with thy plagues, O Death! Hither with thy pestilence, O Sheol!"; Ps. 116:3, "The pangs of Death compassed me, and the pains of Sheol got hold upon me" (cf. II Sam. 22:6). The death-angels of later Judaism are simply the degraded gods of the under-world of an earlier period.

To the attacks of these demons man sooner or later succumbs. "He who at eventide is alive, at daybreak is dead." "The day of death is unknown," but none the less it is certain; for it is "the day that lets no one go." So the ancient Babylonian expressed himself,

¹⁵ H. P. Smith, in *Studies in Memory of W. R. Harper*, I, 55.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

and similarly the ancient Hebrew said, "I go the way of all the earth" (Josh. 23:14; I Kings 2:2); "I know that thou wilt bring me to Death, and to the house appointed for all the living" (Job 30:23); "What man is he that shall live and not see Death, that shall deliver his soul from the hand of Sheol?" (Ps. 89:48); "Remember the sentence upon him, for so also shall thine be; yesterday for me, and today for thee" (Ecclus. 38:22).

Two instances are known in Babylonian literature of persons who escaped death, and were translated to the abode of the gods. Ut(Šit? Pir?)-napishtim, the Babylonian Noah, after narrating the story of the Flood to Gilgamesh, concludes: "Bel went up into the ship, grasped my hands, and led me out, led out my wife also, and caused her to kneel down at my side. He touched our shoulders, stood between us, and blessed us, saying, Formerly Ut-napishtim was a man, now shall Ut-napishtim and his wife be like gods, and Ut-napishtim shall dwell afar at the mouth of the streams" (*Gilgamesh Epic*, XI, 198-204). Adapa just missed immortality by declining the bread and the water of life (*Adapa Myth*, II, 24-34), which shows that it was not considered impossible for men to escape death. In the Old Testament we have the similar cases of Enoch (Gen. 5:24) and Elijah (II Kings 2:11). Such translations were, however, so rare that they constituted no basis for hope that men in general would escape the common doom of humanity.

Babylonian theology knows of a distinction in the fates of those who enter Aralû. One "rests in his chamber and drinks clean water"; another "eats what is left in the pot, the remnants of food that are cast out into the street" (*Gilgamesh Epic*, XII, vi, 1-12). When Ishtar incurs the wrath of Ereshkigal, the queen of the under-world, Ereshkigal bids her servant Namtâru: "Shut her in my palace, loose upon her sixty diseases" (*Ishtar's Descent*, obv. 68 f.). The *Gilgamesh Epic* (X, vi, 35-38) seems to speak of a judgment in the other world: "After the Watch-demon and the Lock-demon have greeted a man, the Anunnaki, the great gods, assemble themselves; Mammetu, who fixes fate, determines with them his fate; they establish death and life."

On this basis, Jeremias and Delitzsch¹⁷ found the theory that the

¹⁷ *Babel und Bibel*, 38 ff.

Babylonians distinguished a Paradise and a Hell in the under-world. The facts do not justify this view. In the passage which speaks of the different fates of the dead, the context shows that these fates depend, not upon moral distinctions, but upon the manner of burial. The one who "rests in his chamber and drinks clean water" is he who has enjoyed the honorable interment of a hero. The one who eats refuse is he "whose corpse has been cast out upon the field, whose ghost has no one to care for him." This is nothing more than a survival of the primitive animistic belief that the repose of the spirit depends upon the proper burial of the body.¹⁸ The "clean water" is not the "water of life," but the libation poured by a son upon the grave. The judgment pronounced by Mammetu and the Anunnaki is not a judgment upon character, that determines eternal life or eternal death, but is merely a decision whether or no a man is to die. Through severe illness his soul is brought down to the very gates of Aralû, and is greeted by the watchman; then the gods decide whether he is to remain in the under-world or is to return to life. This explains the following line, "but the days of death are not revealed." So, after it has been decreed that Ishtar is not to remain in Hades, the Anunnaki are assembled to pronounce her release, and to sprinkle her with the water of life that she may return to the upper-world (*Ishtar's Descent*, rev. 37 f.). The distinction in Aralû is merely one of relative comfort, it is not a distinction of place. In numerous passages the dead of all ages and all degrees are described as dwelling together in one common habitation. Thus in an epic fragment belonging to the Gilgamesh cycle the ghost of Eabani says:

In the house that I have entered, my friend, . . . crowns lie upon the ground. There dwell the wearers of crowns, who of old ruled the land, for whom Bel and Anu have appointed name and memory. Cold dishes are served up to them, and they drink water out of skins. In the house that I have entered, my friend, dwell Enu-priests and Lagaru-priests. There dwell enchanters and magicians. There dwell the anointed priests of the great gods. There dwell the heroes Etana and Ner. There dwells the queen of the under-world Ereshkigal. There dwells Bêlit-şêri, the scribe-goddess of the lower world crouching before her.¹⁹

The Old Testament conception is the same. It too knows of a distinction in the fate of the dead. Ezek. 31:16 speaks of the kings

¹⁸ See Paton, *op. cit.*, *Biblical World*, January, 1910, pp. 13 f.

¹⁹ Jeremias, *Hölle und Paradies*, 16.

of the earth as "the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, that drink water and are comforted in the nether parts of the earth." Ezek. 32:23; Isa. 14:15, 19 speak of those who go down to "the recesses of the Pit" or the "stones of the Pit"; but in both of these cases their sad fate is not due to sin, but to the fact that they are "cast forth from the sepulcher like an abominable branch. . . . as a carcase trodden under foot." Lack of burial prevented rest in Sheol, and lack of burial in the family tomb excluded one from the society of his relatives,²⁰ but there is no trace in the Old Testament of a division of the dead on the basis of character. The sinner is threatened with Sheol as a punishment, but never with a particular section of Sheol (cf. Prov. 2:18; 21:16). The righteous Samuel says to the wicked Saul, who has been rejected by the Lord, "Tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me" (I Sam. 28:19). Jacob says, "I shall go down to the grave unto my son mourning," in spite of the fact that he supposes Joseph to have been devoured by a beast, and therefore to be unburied (Gen. 37:33, 35 J). The Old Testament thinks far more frequently of the miserable lot of all the shades than of distinctions that exist among them.²¹ Isa. 14:9-23 and Ezek. 32:18-32 speak of all men of all races as dwelling together in Sheol, and Job 3:13-19 says:

Now should I have lain down and been quiet; I should have slept; then had I been at rest: With kings and counsellors of the earth who built tombs for themselves, or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver: or as a hidden untimely birth I had not been: as infants which never saw light. There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary are at rest. There the prisoners are at ease together; they hear not the voice of the taskmaster. The small and the great are there; and the slave is free from his master.

This passage bears a striking resemblance to the Babylonian epic fragment quoted above. By both Babylonians and Hebrews Sheol was conceived as a land, a city, or a house, in which all classes of men dwelt together as on earth. Life went on much the same as in the upper-world, only all was shadowy. This conception was simply a survival of primitive beliefs concerning the existence of the dead that were combined with the later doctrine of Sheol.²²

²⁰ See Paton, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 10 ff.

When once a man had entered Sheol the Babylonians believed that it was impossible for him to return to life again. The under-world was "the land of no return" (*Ishtar's Descent*, obv. 1, 6, 41), or the "enduring dwelling" (*ibid.*, rev. 31). Its watchman, the "Lurker of Nergal," does not release when once he has seized a man (*Gilgamesh Epic*, XII, iii, 18). Speaking of his friend Eabani, Gilgamesh says: "My friend whom I loved has become like clay . . . Shall I not also like him lay me down to rest, and not arise for evermore?" (*Gilgamesh Epic*, VIII, v, 36 f.). Similarly David says, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (II Sam. 12: 23); and the wise woman of Tekoah, "We must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again" (II Sam. 14:14); "As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to Sheol shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more" (Job 7:9 f.; cf. 10:21; 16:22; Eccles. 12:5; Eccus. 38:21; Wis. 16:14).

This denial that the dead can return means only that they cannot return to life, not that they may not leave Sheol to haunt the living, or to respond to the summons of a medium. The ancient belief in ghosts and in necromancy continued both in Babylonia and in Israel alongside of the belief in Sheol.²³

Whether the Babylonians believed in the possibility of a resurrection is a disputed question. A number of gods, particularly Marduk, bear the title *muballiṣ mâtûti*, "quickener of the dead." In a hymn it is said, "He whose corpse has gone down to Aralû thou bringest back."²⁴ On the strength of these passages it has been claimed that the Babylonians believed in a resurrection,²⁵ but the evidence is insufficient. All that this language means is that the god in question raises up to life a man who is sick unto death. According to the primitive conception, the soul left the body in illness, or in unconsciousness, and drew near to the under-world. For a time it was doubtful whether it would remain with the shades or return to earth. The god who prevented its final separation from its body was called

²³ See Paton, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-19; and II, February, 1910, pp. 91.

²⁴ King, *Babylonian Magic and Sorcery*, No. 2, 21.

²⁵ Jensen, *Keilinschrijftliche Bibliothek*, VI, 480.

“quickener of the dead,” but that there could be any resurrection after the body had been buried and dissolution had set in there is no evidence; in fact, this idea seems to be directly contrary to the statements just quoted that there is no return for one upon whom Mammetu and the Anunnaki have pronounced sentence of death, but only for one whose entrance to Aralû they postpone. The “water of life” that is guarded by the Anunnaki in Aralû does not serve to bring back the dead, but only to restore those who have gone down alive to Sheol. It is given to Ašûshunamir, the messenger of the gods, that he may return to heaven, and is sprinkled on Ishtar that she may go back to the upper-world (*Ishtar’s Descent*, rev. 19, 34, 38). Gilgamesh is washed with it that he may be cleansed from his leprosy (*Gilgamesh Epic*, XI, 254 ff.), and Adapa has it offered to him that he may attain immortality (*Adapa Myth*, II, 26). In these cases the dead are not restored to life, but the living are prevented from dying. The “water of life” is the divine counterpart of the holy water with which the priest sprinkled the sick man to keep the death-demons from dragging him down to Aralû. In only one passage is the possibility of a real resurrection suggested. When Ishtar is refused admission to Aralû, she says to the porter: “If thou openest not thy gate and I come not in, I will break down the door, I will shatter the bolt, I will break through the threshold and remove the doors, I will bring up the dead, eating, living; the dead shall be more numerous than the living” (*Ishtar’s Descent*, obv. 16–20). This seems to refer to a restoration of the dead to life. From this it follows that the Babylonians regarded it as possible for the great gods to empty Aralû, if they saw fit; but there is no evidence that they believed that this power would ever be exerted.

The Old Testament doctrine is the same. When a man is dangerously ill, his soul is believed to leave his body and to approach the under-world. Thus Job 33:19–22 says: “He is chastened with pain upon his bed, and with continual strife in his bones. His flesh is consumed away that it cannot be seen, and his bones that were not seen stick out. Yea his soul draweth near unto the Pit, and his life to the Destroyers.” Similarly Ps. 88:3 f.: “My soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth near unto Sheol. I am counted with them that go down into the pit.” Isa. 29:4 speaks of half-

dead Judah as speaking like a ghost out of the ground. When Yahweh takes pity on the sufferer and restores him to health, he is said to bring him back from Sheol. Thus Hezekiah, when cured of his dangerous illness says: "Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the Pit of Bel[al?]" (Isa. 38:17; cf. I Sam. 2:6; Job 33:24, 28, 30; Ps. 9:13; 16:10; 30:3; 49:15; 86:13; Lam. 3:53, 55; Jonah 2:6; Wis. 16:13; Tob. 13:2). In none of these passages is a resurrection referred to, or even a blessed immortality for the disembodied spirit, but only a release from impending death. The doctrine of a resurrection of the body does not appear in the Old Testament until after the Exile, and therefore has no connection with ancient Babylonian beliefs. Three cases are recorded in pre-exilic literature of a raising of the dead to life. The first is Elijah's raising of the widow's son (I Kings 17:21 ff.), the second is Elisha's raising of the son of the woman of Shunem (II Kings 4:32 ff.), and the third is the raising of a dead man through contact with the bones of Elisha (II Kings 13:21). In all these cases apparent death had just occurred, but the body had not yet been buried, so that one may question whether the connection between soul and body had been completely severed. These restorations do not differ materially from the preceding instances in which the souls of the dangerously ill are brought back from the gates of Sheol. Pre-exilic literature does not know a single instance in which reanimation occurs after dissolution has set in.

From the foregoing study it appears that the Old Testament doctrine of Sheol is the counterpart in every particular of the Babylonian doctrine of Aralû, and there can be no doubt that, directly or indirectly, it has been derived from Babylonia. When we consider the fact that this belief appears in the earliest Hebrew literature, we must assume that it was acquired soon after the conquest of Canaan; and that probably it was derived from the earlier inhabitants of the land, who, as known from recent archaeological discoveries, had become thoroughly Babylonianized long before the arrival of the Hebrews.